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REVIEWS

Alexander, De Alva S. *A Political History of the State of New York.* Vol. III, 1861-1882. Pp. iv, 561. Price, \$2.50. New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1909.

The third and concluding volume of Congressman Alexander's "History of New York" deals with the stirring years that span the period that opens with "the uprising of the North in 1861" and closes with Cleveland's election in 1882. In this volume the author's treatment presents the same characteristic features, merits and defects, which marked the first two volumes of the work, which were published four years ago.

Chief among its merits should be mentioned the judicious, interesting, and in the main impartial narrative and analysis of political events. This is all the more remarkable and praiseworthy as the author, an active politician, is dealing with a period of comparatively recent date. Another pre-eminent merit which distinguishes this work and raises it far above the level of a mere state history is the relatively large amount of space given to national politics with a view to showing the intimate connection which existed between the politics of the nation and that of the Empire State. So ample and full is the discussion of national affairs that the title of this volume might fittingly be changed to read "The Political History of the State of New York and of the Nation as Viewed by a New York Politician." The mere enumeration of the names of some of the politicians of New York, more than a score in number, who also attained prominence in national affairs during this period, would suffice to indicate the close connection between the political history of New York and that of the nation, and the action and reaction of the one upon the other. This comprehensive treatment is the most important and commendable characteristic of the work.

As was pointed out in the review upon the earlier volumes,¹ it is apparent that Dr. Alexander is thoroughly impressed with the transcendent importance of the rôle played by a few great men. In fact, he has subscribed to the view "that the history of a state or a nation is largely the history of a few leading men." It is, therefore, the careers of a few great leaders and their ambitious rivalries rather than the history of parties or policies with which he is principally concerned. The contests within the party for leadership, as that between Thurlow Weed and Horace Greeley, Reuben E. Fenton and Roscoe Conkling in the Republican party, and the rise of Horatio Seymour and Samuel J. Tilden successively to leadership in the Democratic party, are presented with a wealth of interesting detail.

Moreover, just as in the earlier periods, so in the two decades covered by this volume, there are "two controlling spirits" and two great party leaders that occupy the center of the stage at one time and contend for political mastery, namely, Conkling and Tilden, the leaders of the Republican and Democratic parties respectively. It is with the career of these two leaders that the greater portion of the volume deals. This fact clearly

¹See ANNALS, vol. xxix, pp. 228-230.

reveals the point of view of the author and indicates that the limitations and shortcomings of his treatment are largely due to the undue emphasis placed upon the career of the individual.

Dr. Alexander presents many excellent pen portraits and characterizations of the leading politicians. His account of the rise and operations of the Tweed ring and its final overthrow is especially well done, as is also that of the schism in the New York Republican party and the strife which followed between the "Stalwarts" and "Half-breeds," and the resulting election of Cleveland as governor.

Only occasionally does the author's political bias portray itself. He has made excellent and discriminating use of the newspapers and other contemporary literature, and the exact citation of his sources and the handling of secondary but important details in the footnotes is commendable. His style is clear, interesting and vigorous, occasionally perhaps a trifle too vigorous to suit the purist, as he some times lapses into colloquial English, as when he states that "Weed wobbled in his loyalty" (p. 85), "The Tilden managers shiver," and "threatened them with heart-failure" (p. 343). Also some of the striking page captions suggest the head lines of a yellow journal, as the following examples will demonstrate: "Lincoln's Iron Nerve" (p. 105), "A Bunch of Bad Men" (p. 177), "A Blow Below the Belt" (p. 369), "The Fate of Old Dog Tray" (p. 387), "Conkling Down and Out" (p. 464). An excellent index to the three volumes concludes the work.

So satisfactory in general is this history of New York, that we would express the hope that Dr. Alexander may be led to continue his study and add a fourth volume to the series covering, let us say, the two decades since 1882, the date of the close of his last volume.

HERMAN V. AMES.

University of Pennsylvania.

Barker, J. Ellis. *Great and Greater Britain.* Pp. ix, 380. Price, \$3.00. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1910.

The appearance of a volume dealing with some of the more important British national and imperial problems is especially timely, but this book does not, however, deal extensively with the particular issues raised by the recent political agitations in the United Kingdom. The volume attempts to forecast the future of Britain: whether it is to be continued greatness or decay. The consideration of this question involves a discussion of the large problems confronting British interests, as, for example, naval and military policies, industry, unemployment and physical degeneration, foreign policy and the question of the colonies. The chief emphasis is laid on the necessity for military and naval efficiency, nearly half the book being devoted to the discussion of those subjects from various points of view.

In general the book is good, in that it presents more or less clearly some of the serious problems which the future holds for British rule. Yet in many respects the book hardly fulfils the expectations of the reader. For